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ABSTRACT

Good relationships between community colleges and the businesses in their communities can lend company expertise to college programs and increase corporate contributions to the college's foundation. A business roundtable, which establishes a solid relationship between corporate sponsors and the college and focuses on an important current topic, is a good way to start. The Foundation at California's Ohlone College (OC) has established a successful roundtable program, focusing for the past 2 years on the theme of quality. While the Foundation's first annual roundtable in 1989 had only 5 corporate sponsors and 10 speakers, by 1992 it had 16 sponsors, presented over 50 speakers, and raised over \$90,000 for Foundation programs. The sponsors are the key to a successful roundtable. At OC, sponsors contribute \$5,000, get publicity in all roundtable materials, and participate in conference planning or present a break-out session. Speakers are chosen with an emphasis on employees doing hands-on work, rather than consultants. The roundtables are organized as two-day conferences, with most of the work being done by volunteers from the sponsoring companies. Another key element is the use of special attractions for attendees, such as tours of local businesses. Planning for each event begins a full year in advance. (HAA)

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Network of California Community College Foundations

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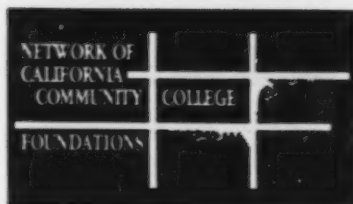
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FOUNDATION DEVELOPMENT

Abstracts

BUSINESS ROUNDTABLES BOOST FUNDS AND AWARENESS

Kathy Maag and Peter Hoffman

(Editor's Note) Ohlone College has developed an innovative and highly successful approach to corporate contributions to its Foundation. The Business Roundtable is the Foundation's annual conference that combines participation opportunities for many business people, as financial support for the Foundation.

Forming good relationships with businesses in your college community is worthwhile for two reasons:

- The business's employees can lend their expertise to help your college's programs.
- Companies can make corporate contributions to help your foundation's bottom line.

A Business Roundtable is an excellent relationship-starter. The Ohlone College Business Roundtable in Fremont, California began four years ago to establish a partnership between education and business and to foster the image of Ohlone College. It has been successful beyond anyone's dreams. It is by far the Foundation's biggest annual fund raiser, and has resulted in tremendous publicity for the college.

The key to the Business Roundtable is the sponsor-college relationship. Through the sponsor companies, the Ohlone College Foundation is given a generous donation, volunteer leadership for the Roundtable committees, and access to other corporate resources. Additional benefits to the college include curriculum enhancement and improvement in the college's own quality processes.

Another vital part of your Roundtable planning is to find a hot topic. The Ohlone College Business Roundtable has focused on quality for the past two years, and has sold out both Roundtables weeks in advance.

Quality will continue to be the focus of the 1993 Roundtable because quality and customer service are topics that are vital to businesses now and in the future.

This abstract can help you develop a Business Roundtable to generate funds and publicity for your foundation.

HISTORY

You don't have to start with 16 corporate sponsors and 50 speakers. The first Ohlone College Business Roundtable, in 1989, began with five sponsors and 10 speakers. In fact, the keynote speaker didn't even show up. But that didn't daunt the group.

With a theme of "Managing a Volatile Future," the first Roundtable attracted 270 participants and raised \$27,000 for the Foundation. The second Roundtable, "Managing the Workforce of the Future," attracted 250 people and raised \$43,000. The third Roundtable in 1991, "Countdown to Quality," proved to be a "hot" theme and was extremely successful. It sold out weeks ahead of time, with 500 participants, and raised \$53,000 for the Foundation.

This year's Roundtable, "Leading the Quality Commitment" was the largest yet, with 16 corporate sponsors and a strong slate of more than 50 speakers in five tracks. The 1992 event sold out two months in advance and raised more than \$90,000 for the Foundation's programs. You can have the same success.

SPONSORS ARE KEY

The key to a successful Roundtable is the sponsors. Sponsors from the Ohlone Roundtable pay a fee of \$5,000. In return, the company sends up to ten participants free to the Roundtable, receives ten invitations to the prestigious Sponsors' Recognition Dinner, and gets publicity in all Roundtable collateral, including newspaper ads, brochures, a banner at the conference, and press releases.

Sponsors also get an opportunity to participate in conference planning or to present one of the breakout sessions. They also get to network with other local business leaders. To start a business Roundtable in your area, we suggest that you round up represen-

tatives from the top companies in your community for an initial brainstorming session. After you have your core sponsor group, enlist their help to host a Sponsors' Luncheon at one of their sites to get more companies involved.

Don't worry if you get only a handful of companies involved in the beginning. If your Roundtable is successful, you will have companies knocking on your door next year wanting to get involved.

SPEAKERS VOLUNTEER THEIR TIME

Also, unique is the fact that about 80 percent of the presenters at the Roundtable are practitioners, rather than consultants. The Roundtable steering committee decided that more people would be interested in hearing from employees doing hands-on work rather than consultants.

The speakers do not get paid; they volunteer their time. They do get to attend the Roundtable free the day of their presentation if they want. Of course, speakers are sent gracious thank-you notes and receive a small gift.

HOW TO GET STARTED

The Roundtable is organized as a two-day conference with various topics focused on a central theme. Its work is done primarily by volunteers from the sponsoring companies, with paid help from the Foundation's executive director, an assistant, and a marketing consultant.

Use your sponsor companies. Place their employees designated to work on the Roundtable and on committees to help you carry out the work.

The following committee assignments will help your group get organized:

- The **program committee** decides the theme, the schedule, the tracks and the sessions, and commits the keynote speakers, as well as other concurrent session speakers.
- The **logistics committee** is the liaison between the conference and its chosen conference facility, looking into what size and how many rooms are available, lunch and dinner menus, registration, and logistics during the Roundtable itself.
- The **sponsor committee** hosts a pre-Roundtable luncheon and uses its business contacts to involve other companies as sponsors.

■ The **marketing committee** plans the advertising, chooses the speakers' and participants' gifts, and works with the marketing consultant on the brochure.

■ The **steering committee** consists of heads from each of the above committees, as well as the staff and the Roundtable chair.

■ **Volunteers** do about 80% of the work for the Ohlone College Business Roundtable. Don't hesitate to ask them to help with any task that comes up.

ADDED ATTRACTIONS ARE A PLUS

Add something unique and interesting for your conference attendees. Tours of local companies not normally open to the public are a unique part of the annual Ohlone College Business Roundtables.

The 1992 Roundtable participants had a choice of seven tours of quality area companies, including car and truck manufacturing at New United Motor Manufacturing, Inc., on-time, overnight delivery operations at Federal Express, and high-tech manufacturing at Soletron.

Buses take participants to and from the tour sites. The most successful tours utilize employees in key work sites who stop their work to explain the operation.

GIVE YOURSELF PLENTY OF TIME TO PLAN

In the first few years, the Ohlone Roundtable was planned and executed in about four months. This year, planning started immediately after the last Roundtable with a review of participant evaluations. It was a year-long process that gave the group plenty of time for planning, marketing, and preparation.

Go ahead and dive in. A Business Roundtable is great publicity—and potentially great financially for your college. Remember to foster those business relationships. Those companies will be your college's friend for years down the road.

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